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Year: 2010

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743921310008707>

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-41700>

Journal Article

Published Version

Originally published at:

Mayer, L (2010). Cosmological simulations of the Milky Way. *Highlights of Astronomy*, 5(15):193.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743921310008707>

# Cosmological simulations of the Milky Way

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**Abstract.** Recent simulations of forming low-mass galaxies suggests a strategy for obtaining realistic models of galaxies like the Milky-Way.

Cosmological simulations of galaxy formation are powerful tools for confronting the  $\Lambda$ CDM model with observational datasets. The increase in mass and spatial resolution and the improvement of sub-grid algorithms for star formation and feedback processes have recently resulted in simulated galaxies with realistic disk size and angular momentum content (Mayer *et al.* 2008; Governato *et al.* 2009a). However, simulated galaxies hosted in halos with masses  $\sim 10^{12} M_{\odot}$  exhibit prominent bulges and structural parameters reminiscent of Sa spirals rather than of Sb/Sc galaxies. Surface densities at the solar radius are larger than that of the Milky Way (MW) by factors of a few and the more massive bulge produces a steeper rotation curve compared to that of the MW (Read *et al.* 2009). At halo masses  $M_{\text{vir}} > 2 \times 10^{12} M_{\odot}$  the predominance of hot-mode gas accretion counters the presence of a prominent star forming disk at  $z = 0$ , producing earlier-type objects resembling S0 galaxies (Brooks *et al.* 2009) and supporting recent estimates based on RAVE that yield  $M_{\text{vir}} \sim 10^{12} M_{\odot}$  (Smith *et al.* 2007).

Yet the solution to forming a realistic MW analog could be at hand. Recently we have performed galaxy-formation simulations for mass scales  $< 10^{11} M_{\odot}$ . By sampling these low-mass galaxies with several millions of particles, we achieve a mass resolution better than  $10^3 M_{\odot}$  in the baryons, thus resolving individual molecular clouds. Star formation can now be tied to gas at molecular cloud densities ( $\rho > 100 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ). A realistic, inhomogeneous interstellar medium is obtained that results naturally in stronger supernova outflows than when the standard star formation threshold ( $\rho = 0.1 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ) is adopted. Such outflows efficiently remove the low-angular momentum baryonic material from the central region, suppressing the formation of a bulge and producing an object with a slowly rising rotation curve in very close agreement with observed dwarf galaxies (Governato *et al.* 2009b; see also Ceverino & Klypin 2009). We argue that comparable resolution of MW-sized galaxies will yield rotation curves and bulge-to-disk ratios appropriate for Sb-Sc spirals at  $z = 0$ . This requires increasing the number of particles employed by more than an order of magnitude.

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